



# Germans and Poles

A divided past, a common future?

RESULTS OF THE POLISH-GERMAN BAROMETER 2018

A cooperation of:

INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

 **Körber**  
Stiftung

 **Konrad**  
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**56%** of the Poles and only **29%** of the surveyed Germans like their neighbouring country.

**73%** of Poles identify with Europe very strongly or strongly. In Germany, **54%** indicated such sentiments.

**70%** of Germans and **60%** of Poles want the focus of both countries mutual relations to be on the present and the future and not on the past.

**50%** of Poles hold the view that the sacrifices that the Polish people have made throughout history have not been sufficiently recognised by the international public. **17%** of Germans share this view.

**64%** of Poles describe Polish-German relations as good. Only **31%** of Germans perceive them like that.



# Germans and Poles: a divided past, a common future?

## Results of the Polish-German Barometer 2018

The collapse of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Europe have brought Germany and Poland closer together. In the face of the heavy burden of their shared past, what Germans and Poles have managed to achieve together in Europe and for Europe is regarded as a success story. Recently, controversy has arisen between the two neighbouring countries, especially with regard to differing perceptions of the past.

What is the current state of the relations between Poland and Germany? Under the "German-Polish Barometer" project, for more than a decade regular surveys have been conducted on a representative sample of both societies. The results of the surveys show how the growing social and economic links affect the mutual perceptions of Germans and Poles. This year's study focused on the relevance of history for both nations and the cooperation between the two countries.

### Main results:

- **Poles and Germans do not, in fact, know each other very well. Almost two-thirds of both have never visited the neighbouring country after 1989.** However, Poles express a fondness for Germans more often than Germans do for Poles. The Polish fondness for Germans has been growing for years, whereas the indicators showing German fondness for Poles have hardly changed since 2000.
- **The predominant associations Poles have with Germany are connected with Nazism and war crimes, whereas the Germans mainly have a vague image of their neighbours** – beautiful landscapes and typical Polish food.
- **More than 60 percent of Poles regard Polish-German relations as good; in Germany this**

### **view is shared by half as many respondents.**

The number of positive responses in Germany has been falling significantly since Poland's new government came into power, whereas in Poland the percentage of positive responses has decreased only slightly over the same period.

- **Poles identify with Europe more strongly than Germans.** However, both societies feel the strongest connection with their nation states.
- **The issue of war reparations and recognition of the sacrifices made by Poland is something that divides Poles and Germans.** Poles themselves are divided on the issue of demanding war reparations from Germany. At the same time, however, half of the surveyed Poles hold the view that the sacrifices that Poland has made in the past have not been sufficiently recognised. Most Germans reject the idea of paying war reparations to Poland and believe that there is sufficient recognition of Polish sacrifices.
- **Despite this, both countries are looking towards the future!** The majority of Germans and Poles believe that their mutual relations should focus on the present and the future.

More information about the survey can be found at:

**[www.koerber-stiftung.de/german-polish-barometer](http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/german-polish-barometer)**

### Database

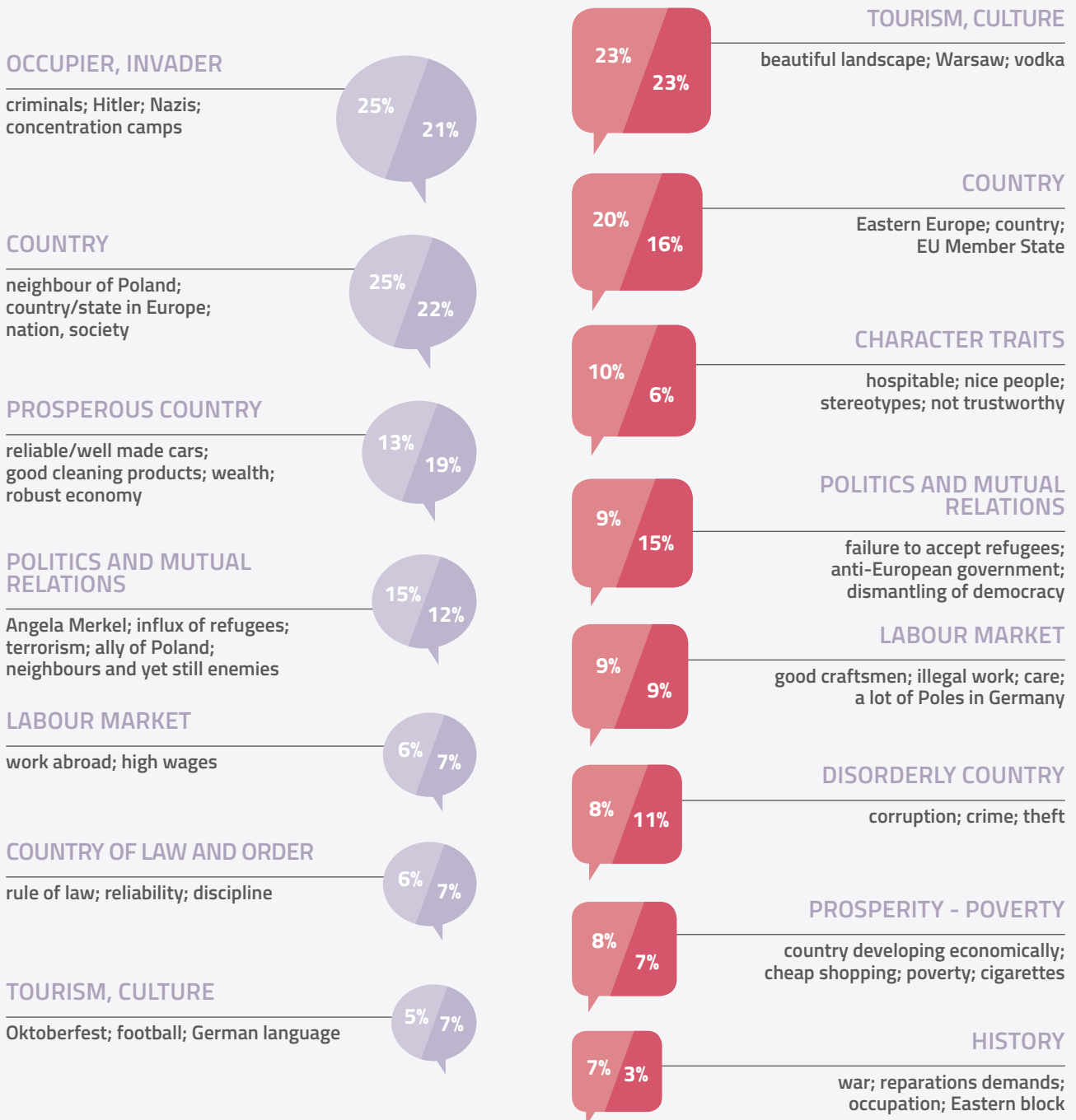
The research in Poland and in Germany has been conducted for the Institute of Public Affairs, the Körber Foundation and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. GfK Polonia carried out the surveys in Poland between the 5th and 12th of April, 2018, on a representative group of 1000 Poles over 15 years of age. GfK SE carried out the surveys in Germany between the 6th and 13th of April, 2018, on a representative group of 1000 Germans over 14 years of age. Survey method: face-to-face interviews.



# In Poland, the most common associations with Germany are Nazism and war crimes

Geography and tourism are in the first place of German associations related to the image of Poland

## What do you associate with the neighbouring country?



What comes to your mind when you hear the word "Germans" and "Germany"/"Poles" and "Poland"? Respondents could name up to 3 associations. These were subsequently summarised in groups.

Source:  
2018: Institute of Public Affairs/Körber-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung;  
2016: Institute of Public Affairs/Bertelsmann-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung



## Most Poles like Germans

Only one-third of Germans reciprocate the sentiment

Polish fondness for the German people has been growing since the year 2000. In 2018, more than half of the Poles surveyed (56 percent) agreed that they like Germans. These positive feelings of the Polish people are shared by roughly half as many Germans (29 percent). The values on the German fondness scale have remained with small exceptions stable for years, at approx. 30 percent, whereas the percentage on the Polish side has been growing. A slight drop in the level of fondness for Germans in Poland was observed after the rule of the Law and Justice party in the years 2005–2007, whereas in Germany such a decline occurred between 2000 and 2006. A possible explanation for that development might be found in concerns

over negative effects of the eastward enlargement of the EU in 2004.

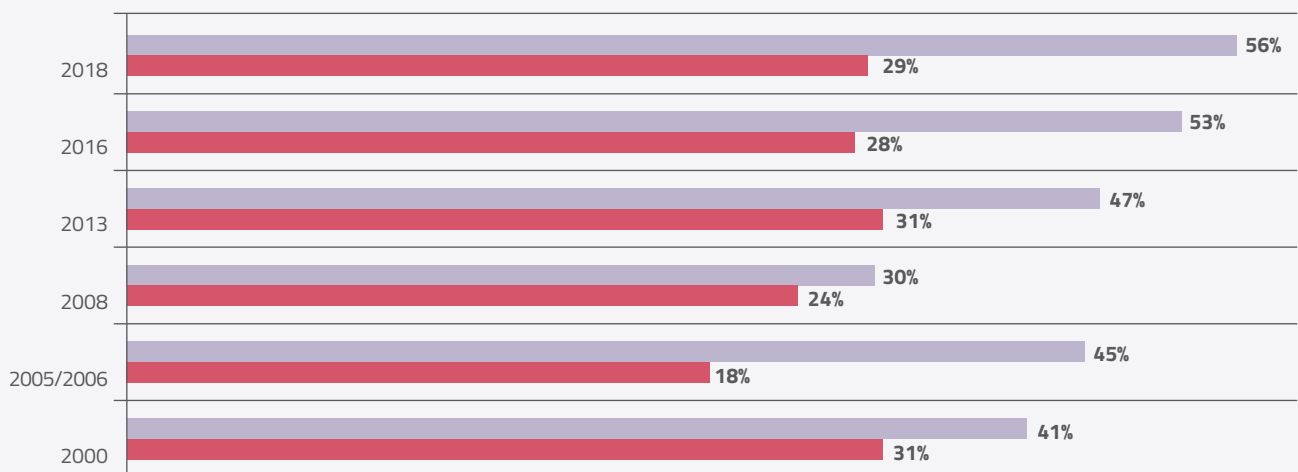
The level of fondness in both countries is related to whether the respondents have already visited the neighbouring country: 70 percent of Germans who regularly visit Poland declare that they like the neighbouring country; among Poles who regularly visit Germany, 68 percent share that sentiment.

However, the percentage of people who have never visited the other country since 1989 remains equally high in both countries: in 2018, it was 66 percent of the German and 70 percent of the Polish respondents.

### What is your attitude towards the Germans / the Poles?

PL Fondness of Poles for Germans

DE Fondness of Germans for Poles



What is your attitude towards the Germans / the Poles? Respondents gave answers on a scale ranging from 1 "I like" to 5 - "I dislike". Answers 1 and 2 have been added up in the diagram.

Source:

2018: Institute of Public Affairs/Körber-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

2016 & 2013: Institute of Public Affairs/Bertelsmann-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

2000 - 2008: Institute of Public Affairs/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung



# Only every second German identifies with Europe

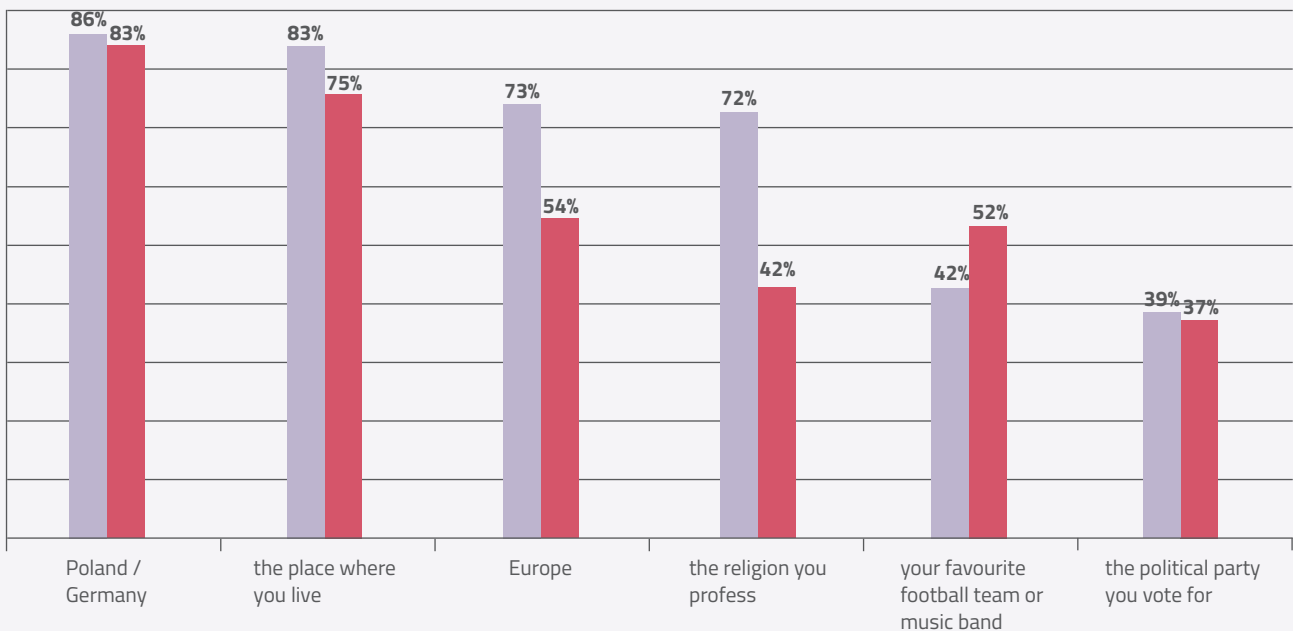
## Poles are avowed Europeans

What people identify with affects their perception and their engagement in public, political or historical debates. In both Germany and in Poland, respondents award their immediate local surroundings an important role for their self-identification.

The historical experience of partitions and occupation determines that Poles identify strongly with the nation state. The Catholic faith is also of key importance for the self-identification of 72 percent of the Polish respondents. Accession to the European Union had been a clearly stated goal of the democratic governments after 1989 and was consistent with the will of the majority of the Polish public, who supported the accession. Today, the great majority of Polish people – 73 percent – identify with Europe.

In Germany, on the other hand, the degree to which people identify with Europe is lower – at the level of 54 percent. Still, more than half of Germans consider themselves Europeans. It is noteworthy that almost one-third of respondents (32 percent) selected a neutral answer (“I neither identify nor do I not identify”) when asked about their identification with Europe. Most German respondents identified with the German nation state itself. Considering the historical scepticism of the German public about the nation state since 1945, this result resembles a remarkable level of approval. Possible explanations may be found either in recent events that had a positive impact on German national self-identification (2006 World Cup, “Willkommenskultur” in relation to refugees in 2015) or by the need for orientation during times of European and global uncertainty.

### How strongly do you identify with ... ?



How strongly do you identify with ... ? Respondents could give answers on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, with values having the following meanings: 1 = “I fully identify”, 3 = “I neither identify nor do I not identify” and 5 = “I do not identify at all”. Answers 1 and 2 have been added up in the diagram.

Source: Institute of Public Affairs/Körber-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2018

# Germans and Poles want their countries' relations to focus primarily on the present and the future

## In Germany, history plays a less important role

According to the prevailing opinions of both the German (70 percent), and the Polish (60 percent) respondents, Polish-German relations should focus more on issues related to the present and the future rather than on history. Among Poles who have already visited Germany, the percentage of people who hold this view is higher (73 percent) than among those do not yet know the neighbouring country (56 percent). A comparison of the current views of Poles to those expressed in 2011 shows that the percentage of respondents who are convinced of the need to focus more on the present and the future has dropped (from 73 percent in 2011).

Current debates about historical policy and the policy of the present Polish government aiming to correct the image of history and change the way in which it is perceived has influenced Polish society. The number of respondents who

consider it a priority to come to terms with history has increased from 20 percent in 2011 to 32 percent today. Among respondents who support the ruling Law and Justice party, 47 percent endorse that view.

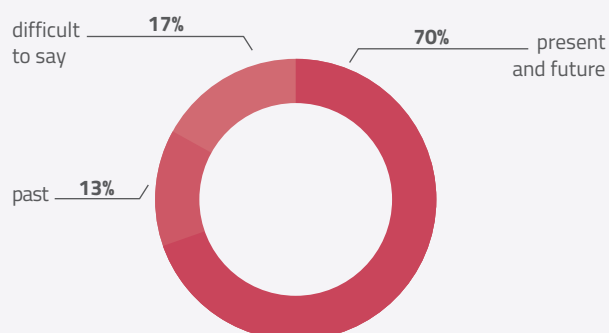
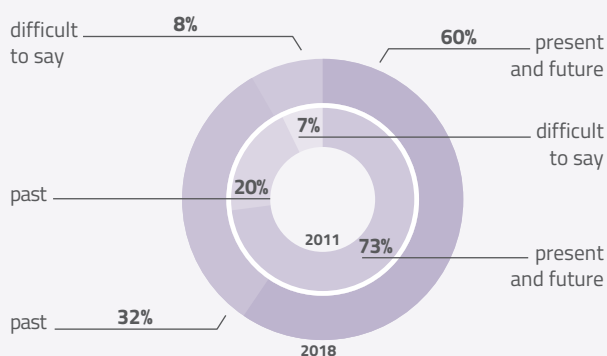
On the German side, party preferences are not statistically relevant. Unlike in Poland, however, a significant number of the respondents were unable to give any answer to this question (17 percent). Among them, the group of 14 to 19 year-olds stands out - 29 percent of that age cohort gave no answer.

In 2011, **73%** of Poles held the view that that relations with Germany should focus on the future and the present. Today **60%** support that conviction.

### What should Polish-German relations focus on?

PL

DE



#### Which opinion is closer to your view?

- In Polish-German relations, the focus should be more on issues concerning the present and the future (e.g. European integration), rather than on history-related issues.
- History-related issues still remain the main problem in Polish-German relations and without resolving them it will not be possible to talk about the present and the future.
- Difficult to say.

Source:

2018: Institute of Public Affairs/Körber-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

2011: Institute of Public Affairs/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung



## Poles and Germans differ in their opinions regarding whether Polish sacrifices have been sufficiently recognised

Young Germans, in particular, find it difficult to state their view

On both sides of the Oder River, the views on whether the suffering of the Polish people and the sacrifices they have made throughout their history have been sufficiently recognised by the international public vary greatly. More than half of the Germans surveyed (53 percent) hold the view that Poland's sacrifices have been sufficiently recognised, whereas an almost equally large number of Poles (50 percent) hold the opposite view.

Among the Germans who were asked this question, a particularly large number (30 percent) of people were unable or did not wish to give a response. Younger respondents (14 to 29 year-olds) in particular found it difficult to state their view (40 percent). With 60 percent subscribing to that view, respondents from the age groups of 60 and 70 year-olds were more often convinced that Polish sacrifices have been sufficiently recognised than their younger counterparts, where only 37 percent shared that understanding.

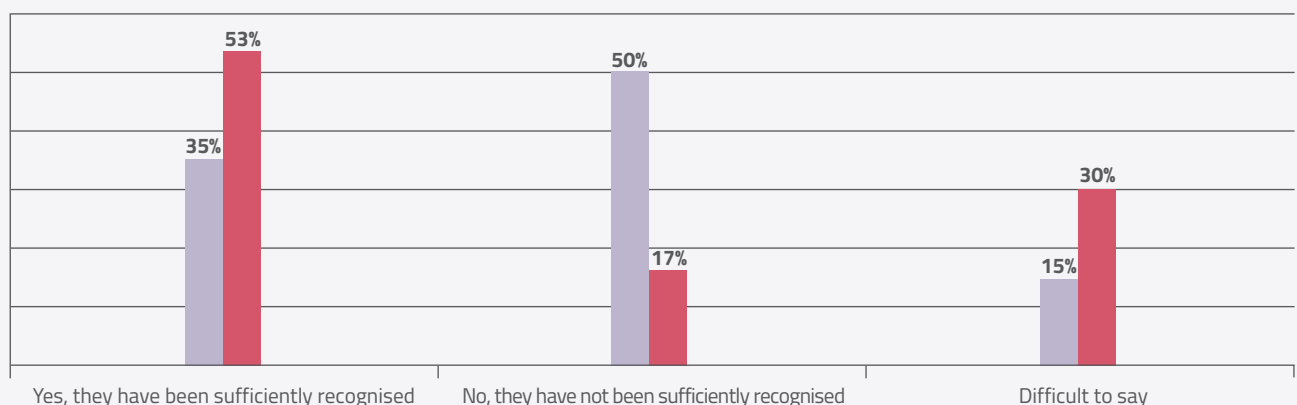
In Poland, political party preferences play an important role in the responses to this question. Supporters of the opposition Civic Platform party are more likely to hold the view that Poland's sacrifices have been sufficiently recognised than supporters of the ruling Law and Justice party (48 percent, as opposed to 25 percent).

**59% of Germans and 53% of Poles support the idea that children in their countries should learn history from a common Polish-German history textbook. For several years, Polish and German historians have been working on the concept for such a textbook, which has been commissioned by both governments. The first volumes have already been completed.**

### Have the sacrifices of the Polish people been sufficiently recognised?

PL

DE



Do you think that the suffering of the Polish people and the sacrifices they have made throughout their history have been sufficiently recognised by the international public?

Source: Institute of Public Affairs/Körber-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2018



# Poles are divided in their views on whether to demand war reparations from Germany

## The majority of Germans reject the idea of paying reparations

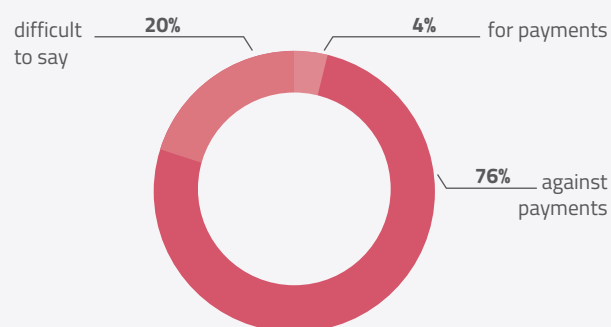
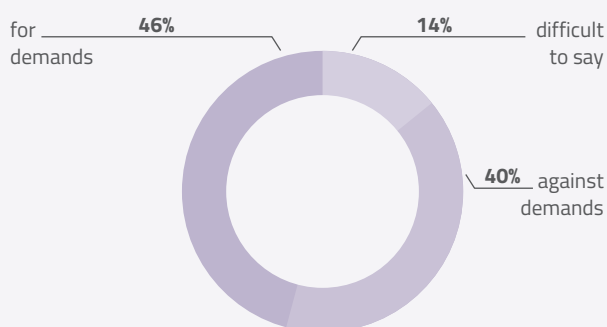
In the course of ongoing debates on German-Polish history, the possibility of demanding war reparations from Germany to compensate for losses during World War II has recently gained attention in Poland. In the summer of 2017, the chairman of the Law and Justice party raised this issue and other politicians of the ruling party took the topic on. In the autumn of 2017, a report prepared by a committee of experts of the Polish parliament confirmed that Poland is indeed entitled to such reparations, but so far no specific legal steps have been undertaken. Many Polish and German legal experts consider the subject to be closed. In the internal political debate in Poland, the issue of war reparations is strongly connected with the view and the concern that Polish sacrifices and suffering have not been sufficiently recognised.

The Polish public is deeply divided on the issue of whether Poland should demand war reparations from Germany. Forty-six percent of respondents express support for war reparations, believing that Poland has not received sufficient financial compensation for the losses suffered during World War II, whereas 40 percent consider this subject closed and hold the view that both countries should now focus on working together within the EU. Among the voters of the Law and Justice party, the support for demanding war reparations amounts to 63 percent and is significantly higher than among the supporters of the opposition Civic Platform party (35 percent). For Germans, the situation is clear: three-quarters of all Germans are against paying war reparations to Poland and support the view of the need to cooperate within the EU. Every fifth respondent in Germany does not have an opinion on this subject.

### Reparations - for or against?

PL

DE



In recent months, the possibility of demanding war reparations from Germany to compensate for the losses suffered by Poland during World War II has been debated in Poland. Which opinion is closer to your view?

Polish answers:

- a) Poland should demand reparations from Germany because Polish losses from World War II have not been properly compensated.
- b) Poland should not demand reparations from Germany because this subject has been closed and both countries should focus on working together within the EU.
- c) Difficult to say.

German answers:

- a) Germany should pay reparations to Poland because Polish losses from World War II have not been properly compensated.
- b) Germany should not pay reparations to Poland because this subject has been closed and both countries should focus on working together within the EU.
- c) Difficult to say.

Source: Institute of Public Affairs/Körber-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2018

# Almost half of the Germans surveyed describe German-Polish relations as poor

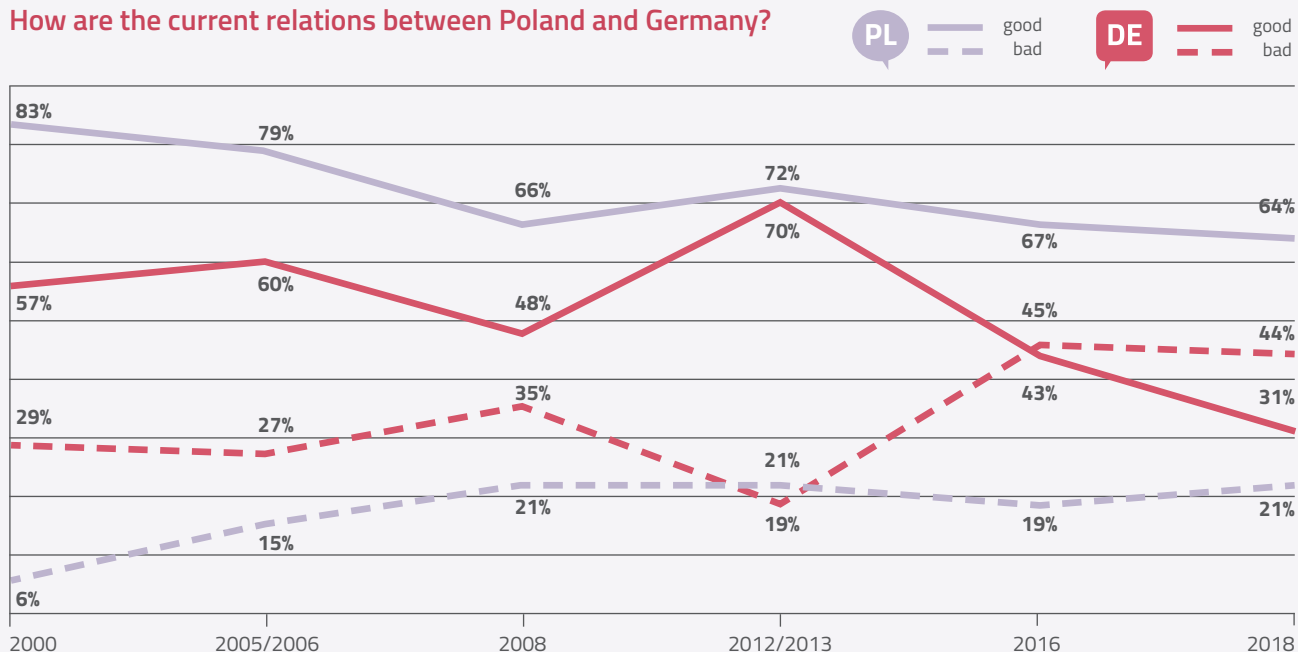
The majority of Poles believe that Poland's relations with Germany are good

The opinions of Poles and Germans about the condition of Polish-German relations vary considerably. Only 31 percent of the Germans surveyed describe them as "very good" or "good", whereas in Poland, this view is shared by twice as many respondents (64 percent). Compared to the years 2012 and 2013, when positive assessments of relations reached a comparably high level of 70 percent on both sides of the Oder River for the first time, the share of positive replies among Polish respondents has decreased slightly, whereas in Germany the number of positive responses has dropped by more than a half. At the same time, the number of German respondents

who are not able, or do not wish to respond to this question has increased to 25 percent.

In Poland, differences in respondents' age did not affect opinions about the condition of the relations with their western neighbour. In Germany, 40 percent of the youngest respondents (14 to 19 year-olds) described mutual relations as good, while only 25 percent of the oldest respondents (over 70 years) shared that view. Germans who visit Poland regularly gave a positive assessment of mutual relations more frequently (51 percent) than those who have not yet visited the neighbouring country (28 percent).

## How are the current relations between Poland and Germany?



## How would you describe the current relations between Poland and Germany?

Source:

2018: Institute of Public Affairs/Körber-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

2016 & 2013: Institute of Public Affairs/Bertelsmann-Stiftung/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

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**“German-Polish Barometer”** is a project which regularly collects and publishes the opinions of Poles and Germans about the condition of Polish-German relations and about current challenges. The Institute of Public Affairs has been conducting this research since the year 2000 in cooperation with the Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Poland. In the years 2013 and 2016, the study was also conducted in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Stiftung. In 2018, the Körber Foundation is the partner of the research project.

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Through its operational projects, in its networks and in conjunction with cooperation partners, the **Körber Foundation** takes on current social challenges in fields of action comprising innovation, international dialogue and living civil society. Inaugurated in 1959 by the entrepreneur and initiator Kurt A. Körber, the foundation is now nationally and internationally active from its sites in Hamburg and Berlin.

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